

# SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

## Motivating Young Minds to Excel

Preparing youth to live in a changing society.

*Negative attitudes, violent behavior, truancy and poor spending habits are preventing some young people from becoming productive citizens who are ready for jobs and life on their own. Land-Grant Universities and USDA are partners with communities, state agencies and schools to improve the odds of these young people through involvement in camps, financial management programs and business opportunities. These resources are preparing our youth for college, careers and ultimately success.*

### Payoff

- **Better behaved.** Thousands of troubled juveniles in Nevada who are rehabilitated after learning life skills through Project Magic are saving taxpayers \$5.4 million a year in incarceration costs. **Nevada** Extension's after-school program is in collaboration with the court system. Juveniles participate in sessions with their parents and are required to perform community service activities. The program also is used in Native American communities to prevent youth violence. **Louisiana** taxpayers are saving \$54,600 on the 168 juveniles who were not sent back to the detention center after successfully completing a 10-week program called Surviving Teens Educating Parents. The teen-parent program has improved teen attitudes and parental respect by 80 percent. The court mandates participation for youth who've exhibited negative behaviors such as curfew violations, criminal activity, illegal drug abuse and truancy. **Florida** Extension is helping at-risk juveniles reduce school violence and peacefully resolve conflict by involving them in Liberty Investing for Tomorrow. Since participating in the 4-H program, 75 high school students have gained leadership abilities and improved their math and English skills. In a similar effort, **New Hampshire's** Teen Assessment Project has involved more than 900 teens in community activities to strengthen partnerships between youth and adults.
- **Smoke free.** 4-Hers in Arizona are getting educated about the health risks associated with smoking since a survey indicated that more middle school students are experimenting with cigarettes. **Arizona** Extension has introduced tobacco prevention to sixth and seventh graders trained as peer educators for

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the Tobacco Risk Awareness Program. More than 500 middle school students have been trained as peer educators for elementary students. Seventy-eight percent of the more than 1,000 third through fifth graders participating in the program now are aware of the health hazards associated with tobacco. A peer leader said, "Not only have I learned about tobacco prevention, I've also learned about being a leader. I have taught kids about the dangers of smoking."

- **Aspiring business owners.** Teens in Texas are performing better in school since they participated in Texas Teens Exploring Entrepreneurial Minds. **Prairie View A&M** Extension's pilot program trained more than 270 youth to own and operate their own businesses. Twenty-two participants displayed their businesses at a trade show for middle school students and the public. Teachers, parents and community business owners collaborated on the project. It has enabled these youth, once on the verge of dropping out of school, to develop leadership and business skills and improve their self-esteem.
- **Investing in youth.** A 1999 survey by the American Savings Education Council found that 55 percent of all college students and 7 percent of high school students have a major credit card. To help students understand financial planning, and to learn the difference between wants and needs, **Mississippi State** Extension conducted 4-H financial planning for more than 3,000 high school students. Lessons teach students about the basics of financial planning, personal budgets, check writing, deductions on paycheck stubs, taxes and credit. These students are now "MoneySmart" as required by Mississippi law. Using a different approach, **Maryland Eastern-Shore** 4-H teaches high school students about consumer issues with LifeSmarts, an Internet-based game show competition. In 2001, Maryland won the national competition for the second year and hosted 733 student teams. **West Virginia** Extension's High School Financial Planning Program improved the financial management practices of more than 500 students, according to evaluations.

- **Water-saving solutions.** Conserving water as a natural resource has allowed more than 11,000 students to take a ride on **Virginia's** Water Wizard Van. The mobile unit used to teach water resource education is rotated to the six 4-H centers and targets preschool to seventh graders. One student said, "We didn't have to take a field trip to learn about water." Teachers say the program is great hands-on experience. **Delaware** Extension's approach to preserving water resources begins with educating youth about ways to protect the soil and water. About 150 8- to 12-year-olds are learning the importance of water and soil to daily survival during its 4-H camps. Students increased their knowledge of basic water and soil principles by 30 percent after participating in the hands-on activities that included developing a garden to educate the community about the importance of soil testing and reducing fertilizer use on lawns and gardens.
- **The great outdoors.** Fifty high schools students are more interested in forestry and natural resources careers after doing hands-on activities at South Carolina's Natural Resources Career Camp. With funding from the USDA Forest Service, **South Carolina State** Extension conducted the camp to increase minority student enrollment in natural resources fields. About 95 percent of the participants increased their knowledge of forestry careers.



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